

characterizes as "resistance" any dissident self-interpretation on the part of the patient. Similarly, Barth shows how the Marxian theory of false consciousness functions as a weapon to disable all theoretical and practical criticism of Marxist doctrine. For, with its metaphysical doctrine of the human essence alienated from itself in class (and especially capitalist) society, Marxism empowers its adherents to override the avowed purposes and beliefs of existing men. So it is that in injuring real men, Marxists can claim to be benefiting them, and in enslaving them, effecting their liberation.

By comparison with such a luminously clear dissection of the conceptual basis of the theory of ideology as may be found in John Plamenatz's book *Ideology*, Barth's treatment may not possess the highest degree of critical perspicuity. In contrast to Plamenatz's almost leisurely survey of contemporary theories of ideology, however, Barth's book has a polemical urgency that our present predicament surely warrants. Plamenatz's lucid demonstration of the fallacies and confusions underlying the Marxian theories of objective interests and false consciousness has not prevented the reemergence in the writings of such Marxists as Althusser and Dalibar of turgidly obscure versions of these same errors. Nor does his treatment—under the category of "the political uses of ideology"—of the totalitarian administration of thought really capture the explosive mixture of moral skepticism, utopian perfectibilism, all-encompassing relativism, and messianic dogmatism that is the paradoxical reality of modern ideology. Barth's argument cuts closer to the bone and shows the theory of ideology to be a threat to the political order of a free society.

The importance of Barth's book is, finally, in its explanation of the bearing of modern doubt on the prospects of freedom. His real antagonist is that peculiarly modern brand of skeptical liberalism that seeks to ground the defense of liberty in the fallibility of all our beliefs. As the last chapter of his book shows, Barth's real objection to this kind of liberalism is not that it embodies any kind of formal self-contradiction, but that any society which embraces it is likely to be self-destructing. This is not an original argument, for its lineage can be traced back at least as far as such conservative and reactionary thinkers as Edmund Burke and Joseph de Maistre, and it has been revived by such classical liberal writers as Michael Polanyi and Wilhelm Röpke. Still, Barth's argument is an important one—worth restating and here powerfully stated—which every partisan of a free society should weigh. For his claim is nothing less than that a free society which is also stable cannot be a completely open society in which nothing is exempt from criticism and questioning. Whether this assertion ultimately turns out to be true or false, it contains a challenge to our complacency in a way we cannot afford to ignore. □

MUSIC

THE LESTER YOUNG STORY: Vols. I, II, and III. Columbia Records (JG33502, JG34837, JG34840), Vol. I, \$6.98; Vols. II and III, \$8.98 each.

The onliest Prez

NAT HENTOFF

WHEN LESTER YOUNG WAS coming up in the 1930s, he didn't sound like a tenor saxophonist.

The reigning monarch of the instrument was Coleman Hawkins, whose tone was big and bursting, and that's the way Hawkins's eager competitors tried to sound. But Lester's tone was light, in keeping with his floating time. And once, when Young had taken Hawkins's place in Fletcher Henderson's band, he roomed at the boss's home to be awakened each morning by Fletcher's wife, Leora, as she played recordings by Hawkins for the wayward young man.

"Every morning," Young remembered, "that bitch would say, 'Lester, can't you play like this?' I just listened, I didn't want to hurt her feelings."

But Young's feelings were hurt, and Billie Holiday would try to gentle him out of those blues. "I told him, 'It doesn't matter because you have a beautiful tone. And you watch. After a while, everybody's going to be copying you.' And it came to be."

Indeed it did. In time, hundreds, thousands of tenors went Lester's way. And altoists too. "He played so clean and beautiful," said Charlie Parker who, as a very young man, was touched in Kansas City by Lester's grace and supple imagination.

By the time I knew him, in the late 1940s, it would never have occurred to anyone to fault Lester's tone or any other aspect of his playing. Actually, it was sometimes embarrassing to see him in a club listening to one of his many imitators. On one such occasion at Birdland, Lester, at the end of another tenor player's set, shook his head and said, "He didn't leave anything of me for me to play."

NAT HENTOFF has written widely on jazz. His most recent book on the subject is *Jazz Is*.

Nonetheless, as he knew, he remained the onliest Prez (a nickname given him by Billie Holiday, whom he had first called Lady Day). Once on stand himself, there was that utterly singular melodic flow, the deeply easeful swing, and that subtly variegated, lyrical sound that often came so close to the human voice.

OFF THE STAND, LESTER WAS just as *sui generis*. A loner, gentle, considerate, shy, he was like Duke Ellington in his passion for avoiding unpleasantness. Yet he was equally insistent on following his own inner rhythm section. For a time, he drank enormous quantities of liquor, but differently. Courvoisier with a beer chaser. Gin followed by sherry. And there was also a period during which Young affected effeminacy even though he was never a homosexual. In some convoluted way, it amused him to appear even *more* different.

So too he played with language as another way of leaving his mark. It was Lester who invented the phrase, "I feel a draft"—meaning there is a racist in the room, or someone otherwise uncivilized. And when telling a sideman to take three more choruses, Lester would say, "Have a trio." Moreover, he gave permanent nicknames to others beside Billie Holiday—among them, Harry "Sweets" Edison and "Sir" Charles Thompson.

Lester could also talk directly to the point. Herschel Evans, a friendly rival in Count Basie's band, played tenor in the Hawkins tradition. One night he mockingly asked Lester, "Why don't you play alto, man? You got an alto tone." Lester tapped his head and said, "There's things going on up there, man. But some of *you* guys are all belly."

Since Lester's death in 1959 at the age of 49, not all the "things going on up there" that he put on record have been generally available. Now, John Hammond and Michael Brooks, in one of the most important reissue projects in jazz history, have released three volumes of *The Lester Young Story* on Columbia. (Each album has two discs, extensive notes by Brooks, and a discography.)

It should be stressed that the series is not just for instructive historic listening. Young's playing arches over time as it does over conventional bar lines. His joyousness, poignancy, wit, and sheer delight in the act of imagination have a freshness and immediacy characteristic, for that matter, of Duke Ellington or Charlie Parker. And what John Lewis, who played piano for Young on occasion, said of him in life applies as well to the present impact of these re-



GARY SCOTT

cordings: "The basic mark of Lester is that he's always young. He stays young in his playing. Some people are always crying for love and kindness; but Lester doesn't cry. The ways he seems to see *being* is, 'Here we are. Let's have the best time we can.' "

VOLUME ONE STARTS WITH AN astonishing apotheosis of swing—a four-side session, with one alternate take, recorded in Chicago by John Hammond in 1936. A small combo of Basie sidemen (the Count was under contract elsewhere) create one of the most exhilarating grooves ever recorded. Much of the rest of the initial volume consists of the Billie Holiday-Teddy Wilson sides that have never been equaled for relaxed jazz singing and swinging. These, too, were among John Hammond's extensive contributions to the music. (For details of the Chicago and Holiday sessions, and much else in Hammond's nonpareil life as a jazz catalyst, there is the new *John Hammond on Record/An Autobiography*, Ridge Press/Summit Books.)

Lester was a particular source of pleasurable encouragement for Billie Holiday. They felt much the same way about music. Lady Day liked to sound as if she were a horn—often Lester's horn. And Prez, as she once said, "sings with his horn. You listen and you can almost hear the words." Indeed, Lester told me a few years before he died: "A musician should know the lyrics of the songs he plays. That completes it. Then you can go for yourself and you know what you're doing. A lot of musicians that play nowadays don't know the lyrics of the songs. That way they're just playing the changes, not the song."

Volume Two of *The Lester Young Story* consists of more of the Billie Holiday-Teddy

Wilson dates, along with Lester's "Honeysuckle Rose" solo from the 1938 Benny Goodman Carnegie Hall Concert. As a dividend, there are eight alternate takes from the Holiday sessions, thereby providing a palpable sense of the nature of jazz improvisation.

In a technical note appended to each volume, it's noted that many of these previously unissued performances had been rejected because of certain technical problems rather than because of musicians' errors. "Lester, especially, had a habit of producing certain sound frequencies on his horn that caused the needles on the recording gauges to practically burst their glass." As always, Prez came on differently.

Volume Three begins with small combo dates under Teddy Wilson, shifts to a Basie chamber group, and then to the full Basie band, including a marvelously airborne "Taxi War-Dance." There are also two tracks and an alternate from a Glenn Hardman date. In addition to Prez, there are especially satisfying solos by Buck Clayton and Count Basie, along with incisive, high-spirited vocals by Helen Humes. And in the notes, there is a characteristic eschatological comment by Prez on Herschel Evans: "I was the last person to see him die. In fact, I paid the doctor for his bill and everything. He loved his instrument and I loved mine, too. So fuck you, fuck me."

On occasion, in *The Lester Young Story*, Prez can be heard on clarinet. On that instrument too, he sang with his horn but with a liquid flow and twilight sound that no clarinetist in jazz has ever approached. Had he preferred, Young could have been the Prez of the clarinet too. He told more of a story in one chorus than Benny Goodman in 20.

IN OR OUT OF JAZZ, I HAVE never known anyone as original as Lester Young. Not that I think I knew him at all. I doubt if anyone white did, and few blacks. What Prez wanted known was in his music. And that he took pride in. "I feel funny listening to my own records," Lester told me once. "I think I enjoy them too well. I might repeat what I hear on them when I play, so I don't like to listen to them over and over. If I listened to them too much, I'd be thinking about them when I'm playing or recording new ones instead of creating."

Again like Duke Ellington, Lester did not like to look back. Toward the end, when Lester especially needed money, he was asked to make an album with a small band of former Basie musicians. The idea was to "reconstruct" the vintage Basie sound. Lester refused. "I can't do it. I don't play like that anymore. I play different; I live different. This is later. That was then. We change, we move on."

And similarly, Young encouraged younger musicians. In the years on his own as a leader, he usually employed musicians on the way up rather than established players. Part of the reason was bread. Lester didn't pay all that well, telling his sidemen, "You got to save your pennies to go with Prez." But the other part of the reason was that he felt it his responsibility to open space for the newer horns.

When Lester recorded for Norman Granz, for instance, he would tell the impresario, "I've got to give the kiddies a gig."

"So," Granz recalls, "we'd have to use his people. Afterwards, Lester would sometimes admit the records weren't as good as they could have been if we had used better-known guys." But at least the kiddies had had another gig, and that much more exposure.

AS FOR LISTENING TO THE *Lester Young Story*, a particularly useful guide has been provided by John Lewis:

"If you have a melodic design that is strong enough, you can build on that design and on the accompanying rhythm patterns without relying on any particular harmonic progression. This is especially true if there is enough rhythmic character. Lester Young did that for years. He didn't always have to lean on the harmonic pattern. He could sustain a chorus by his melodic ideas and rhythm. The chords were there, and Lester could always fill out any chord that needed it, but he was not strictly dependent on the usual progression."

In sum, Prez was one of the first of the modernists and, for that matter, of the postmodernists. Once he had found his way, he followed it, no matter what anyone thought. I've often wondered what choruses were building in Lester's head on those awful mornings when Leora Henderson would force him to listen to Coleman Hawkins playing the "right" way on the tenor.

"Hell," Prez once said, "she played trumpet herself—circus trumpet!"

THE TURNING POINT and THE GOODBYE GIRL, both directed by Herbert Ross.

The best new movies of 1943

STEPHEN HARVEY

IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH PRESENCE of mind to realize that in the last year or so, the style and substance of American movies have been radically turned around. Almost overnight the blood-spattered nihilism of the early seventies—the appeal of which was attributed to everything from sunspots to the Imperial Presidency—has begun to seem as remote as the odes to the counterculture of the late sixties. Instead, the most influential movies lately have come out emphatically on the side of what their directors conceive to be human goodness and self-fulfillment. In movies as seemingly disparate as *Rocky* and *Star Wars*, the message is largely the same—we are not clockwork zombies, immobilized by urban anomie, cataclysms both natural and man-made, or the infernal designs of Beelzebub; we make our own destinies.

This year moviegoers have amply demonstrated their hunger for these reassuring truisms, and after a five-year siege of rampant on-screen paranoia, who can blame them? The irony is that the more these films try to keep up with the mood of the times, the further back they hearken in search of inspiration. The current crop of filmmakers is so unused to invoking the cause of humanism that it's been forced to rummage through the vaults of faded movie memories for the key. Hence *Rocky's* upbeat underdog is really just Mr. Deeds or Mr. Smith with an inner-city accent, and *Star Wars* a computerized *Buck Rogers* in stereophonic sound. Even *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* couldn't have existed if it weren't for the likes of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* a

generation ago. (As for *New York, New York*, one could go mad trying to unravel all the homages to Hollywood's *ancien régime*.) As cycles go, this one has already spawned its share of entertaining movies, but sooner or later this retrospective mania is bound to induce a crick in the neck of audiences and film-makers alike.

Consistently enough, *The Goodbye Girl* and *The Turning Point*, two highly touted winter releases, feverishly resuscitate yet another pair of bygone genres—namely, the three-hankie “women’s picture” and the screwball romantic comedy. Each betrays an almost morbid recall of archaic movie conventions, while trying to seem resolutely modern at the same time. Both were directed by the prolific Herbert Ross, which goes far to explain their limitations.

ROSS'S CAREER IS LIVING PROOF that the old adage about film being a director's medium doesn't always work out in practice. Over the last decade, Ross has divided his time largely between focusing the spotlight for divas like Barbra Streisand (*Funny Lady*, *The Owl and the Pussycat*) and dutifully transcribing onto celluloid the plays of Neil Simon (*The Sunshine Boys*), Woody Allen (*Play It Again, Sam*), and such. At best, the result has been a few serviceable, if pedestrian, vehicles for the hot property in question; at worst, Ross has simply allowed either the narcissism of the star or the proscenium archness of the script to be registered intact, photographed in a style apparently cribbed from episodes of *Love, American Style*.

Although *The Goodbye Girl* is as strident and stagy as most of the rest, Ross's usual alibis don't apply here; Richard Dreyfuss and Marsha Mason haven't the box-office clout to justify their excesses, and while Neil Simon provided the script, it was an original written directly for the screen. I use the word “original” in its loosest possible meaning, because the plot has been lifted wholesale from that charming forties comedy *The More the Merrier*, in which Jean Arthur and Joel McCrea shared a cramped Washington apartment and, despite themselves, fell in love, with an assist from that caustic old cupid, Charles Coburn. There has already been one credited remake of this story (*Walk Don't Run*, with Cary Grant in the Coburn part) transplanted to Tokyo during the Olympics; this time around, Irresistible Force (Dreyfuss) collides with Immovable Object (Mason) on New York's Upper West Side. Understandably, the carbon has gotten a little bit blurry with age, and the romantic couple's peevish bickerings over invaded turf haven't a

fraction of the comic freshness and precision of the original model. Simon's major innovations have been to make the lead characters a pair of career-frustrated performers, and to replace the elderly matchmaker with a tart-tongued child (Quinn Cummings); yet even she's just a female replica of Ellen Burstyn's sassy son from *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*. But then, the whole script is promiscuously derivative, borrowing from *A Chorus Line* (Mason's abortive dance audition), *A Thousand Clowns* (precocious kid loves childlike grown-up), ad infinitum.

Still, nobody but Simon could have written *The Goodbye Girl*—its acrid tone and shameless manipulation are unmistakable. Both writer and director are bent on disarming the audience with their characters' warmth and spontaneity, and Simon has made his usual cursory attempt to give the two main characters a facsimile of depth (rejection by one man too many has made her insecure; while underneath his bombast, Dreyfuss is as vulnerable as Mason). Yet each wayward moment of genuine feeling that threatens to surface is gunned down in the barrage of one-liners from the Master. Simon can't seem to stop himself, no matter how threadbare—or alien to the character forced to utter them—the quips get.

The more these films try to keep up with the mood of the times, the further back they hearken for inspiration.

LESS ENDEARING STILL IS Simon's palpable disdain for anyone unfortunate enough not to be white or heterosexual. In *The Goodbye Girl's* Simonized New York, blacks, Puerto Ricans, even Japanese car salesmen exist solely to harass those few whites plucky enough to stick it out in the big city. He reserves the heavy ammo for homosexuals, the mere mention of whom, at this late date, is still expected to provoke paroxysms of unrestrained mirth. When forced by an eccentric off-Broadway director to play Richard III as the queen of the realm, Dreyfuss vents his dismay in an endless stream of “fruit” jokes; later the heroine chimes in with the observation that what made dancing in the chorus a particular drag, was the fact that the boys in the back row had higher voices than hers. It's bad enough that Simon thinks this is funny—worse yet that we're supposed to take this as evidence of how lovable and normal these characters are.

Ross's direction and the camera work are

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